THREE DARLINGS

Thomas Andrews

Mrs. Annie Andrews
Brasília 1972.



"The Bird had Flown." *Page* 39.

THE

THREE DARLINGS:

OR,

The Children of Adoption.

"That man may last, but never lives,
Who much receives, but nothing gives;
Whom none can love, whom none can thank:
Creation's blot—creation's blank.
But he who marks from day to day,
With generous acts his radiant way,
Treads the same path his Saviour trod—
The path to glory and to God."

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PREFACE.

THERE are many earnest, active spirits, who in this day of philanthropy are eagerly asking, "What good can *we* do? We have no money, we have no influence." To such this little book is addressed, with a desire that it may be to them a suggestive token that they are not, because poor and unknown, to be left out of the walks of usefulness. Like this good servant of the Lord, they may feel and care for some of the homeless, friendless little ones so numerous around us. Like her, they may give heart-room, a home, and a godly training; and like her, finally receive their reward from Him who has said, "Nurse this child for me and *I* will pay thee thy wages."

H. E. B.

THE THREE DARLINGS:

OR,

THE CHILDREN OF ADOPTION.

CHAPTER I.

THE FIRST HOME.

In a flourishing city, just across the river from our great commercial metropolis, in a long, dirty street, mostly inhabited by poor emigrant families, lived a woman named Mary Farrall. No one with common sympathy could fail to pity her, as they looked upon her meagre, wretched face, or watched her, wearily dragging the pail, half filled with water, from the pump to her dark, dismal tenement. She was poor, sick and unhappy—very far below in society what she might have been—the mere wreck of what she once was. She knew this, and it added the bitterest ingredients to her cup of misery.

Once she was a bright, pretty girl—the life and light of a happy English home. But she chose in her wayward youth, in opposition to the wishes of kind parents,

to marry a reckless Irish youth, and then with him to flee from justly-deserved censure to these western shores —expecting with him to find happiness in a strange land. But alas! she had not entered the right path. The gateway of disobedience never yet opened upon the flowery paths of peace and joy. Many, oh how many, have sought the same, in the same way, and the experience of every one has been that of bitter disappointment. Mary Farrall had learned it, when it was too late to retrace her steps; and now she had only to reap the fruits of her folly and self-will.

James, her husband, was a well-taught young man, and a good workman. He might have earned enough to support a family quite prettily, but he had acquired a taste for the intoxicating cup, and it was not long before he found the tavern and drunken associates more congenial than his home and young wife; and poor Mary's first grief was to find herself united to an intemperate and neglectful husband. Now disappointment and ill treatment crushed her heart—then came sickness and care, poverty and remorse—and no wonder the roses faded from her cheek, the light from her eye, and cheerfulness and hope from her spirit.

One day she opened a drawer in a small bureau, and caught sight of her little Bible, snugly stowed away in the corner; and the pretty shawl which her father had given her for a present on her eighteeenth birth-day, and the pictures of her home and youthful scenes came back as with a lightning's glance upon her memory. She pressed her hands to her heart, as if she would fain hold

it from breaking, and while the scalding tears streamed in torrents from her eyes, she cried—"My home—my father—my mother! I cannot bear the thought! O God, help me to forget them, to forget them for ever!" and groans and convulsive sobs showed the agony of her spirit.

"Why, Mary Farrall, what on earth is the matter? What has happened now?" said a neighbor, who was just then passing the door, and heard the distressed cry.

Poor Mary turned her head at the voice, and her eyes stared vacantly, but her lips moved not in reply. Her heart was far away across the wide ocean—and a stranger must not intermeddle with her woes.

In the course of years Mary had many children, but all save three had been laid to rest in their last sleep, and the poor mother was happier when she thought of them, than she was to see the three living ones who had looked up to her for their daily bread. Not that she had no love for her children—on the contrary, it was the very excess of that love that made her rejoice. She remembered that in the teachings of her early childhood she had learned, "Of such is the kingdom of heaven," and she believed it was well with them. It is only strength of sorrow, or strength of faith, that will make a mother willing, yea, glad, to resign her little ones to the dark grave. Faith sees for them a brighter and better home above, and in "Our Father's" will finds reason enough to give up the dear objects of an earthly love. But when a mother has endured all the ills of life—separation from kindred, unkind treatment, disappointment.

pain and want—the thought that her children must follow her in the same path of wretchedness, is agony to her, and to spare them the woes whose bitterness she has tasted, she gladly shuts their eyes in death, and lays their little forms away from her for ever. Such were Mary's feelings about her dead children, and now the living ones were the only tie that bound her to life. They were bright, intelligent children, and pretty, too, and engaging as any others, if they had had the care bestowed on them that many have. But Mary had nothing to clothe them in but the poorest garments—and was so sick and miserable herself all the time, that she felt no ambition to keep them clean and tidy. Their father, of course, cared nothing for them. His time and money were spent at the tavern, and all they had to live upon, was what Mary could earn by the labor of her own hands. Of course, that was not much. But a mother will exert herself till the last breath for her children, and so did she; and she bent exhausted over her work, or paused for a moment's breath, or sat in her wretched bed in the dark night, racked with that hollow cough—her only thought was—"My children—*my three darlings*—what will become of them?"

CHAPTER II.

SIMPLE PIETY.

In the same city, not far from this abode of want and woe, lived another woman, poor in this world's goods, but rich in faith and good works. Mrs. Darling—for such was her name—had married, in her early youth, a pious and enterprising young man, whose daily occupation obtained for them a very pretty home, whose neatness, quietness and love were its crowning endearments. Their only sorrow was that they had no children—yet in their humble, submissive piety, they reconciled themselves to this disappointment, by often saying, "The Lord knows best, and he has wise reasons for denying us."

"If I had children," said the young wife, "it would be such a delight to take care of them—to make their clothes and to teach them—to—"

"You would think of them too much, I 'm afraid, Eliza," interrogated her husband, "and it may be that is why we have none. The Lord will not give us what he knows we should love more than himself."

"Perhaps it is so," said Eliza. "He sees farther than we do—and I know it is all for the best, for *He always does right*. I have thought sometimes myself, that if I

had a family, I should never find time to go abroad to do good, to visit the poor and the sick, and I love to do that."

"You remember our minister's sermon last New Year's, do n't you? He said, 'God gave everybody the work to do which he knew they could do best. Some he made parents, and some missionaries, and some wrote books, and some visited the poor,' &c. I could n't help thinking of you then—that God saw you could n't bring up children so well as you could do something else, and so he didn't give us any."

"Yes, and perhaps if I have none of my own, I may have somebody else's to bring up one of these days—who knows? You remember old Mr. and Mrs. Colburn, where I used to go so much before we were married. They never had any children of their own, and it happened very well—"

"Do n't say happened, wife—say Providence ordered it so. There is no *happening* in our lot—it 's *all ordering*."

"Well, you 're right; but as I was going to say, it was very well, for when her sister died and left two little ones with a poor drunken father, they just adopted them, and brought them up. Now, if they had had any of their own, they would n't have been so willing to do that perhaps, and then the poor little things would have been sent to the poor-house."

"Yes, wife, it 's all right. 'He doeth all things well.' Now let 's sing our hymn—

"My God! the covenant of thy love
Abides forever sure;
And in its matchless grace I find
My happiness secure.

"Since thou, the everlasting God,
My Father art become,
Jesus, my guardian and friend,
And heaven my final home;—

"I welcome all thy sovereign will,
For all that will is love;
And when I know not what thou dost,
I wait the light above.

"Thy covenant in the darkest gloom
Shall heavenly rays impart,
And when my eyelids close in death,
Sustain my fainting heart."

So did they comfort themselves under their disappointment, and though this one desire of their hearts was ungratified, yet they were not unhappy.

But God in his holy Providence, after many years of prosperity and peace, caused a deep shadow to fall upon the pathway of this worthy couple. A terrible accident happened in the workshop where Mr. Darling pursued his daily business. Some of the machinery suddenly gave way, and he, with several others, were severely injured. He was brought home insensible to his afflicted wife; but it was not till after weeks of pain and suffering on his part, and patient, ceaseless care on hers, that the dreadful truth, the worst of their calamity, burst upon them. *He was blind.*

What was to be done now? How were they to be supported? Must they give up their pleasant home?

"I almost wish I had died on the spot, as Simpson did," said the poor man one day despondingly.

"Oh, husband, do not say so; you forget that it is God's hand," said the sympathizing wife, "and we are sure that *he cannot do wrong*. He has taken away your sight, and if it does seem dark before us, it is not dark to him. He can lead us along, and he will. You remember the promise, 'I will lead the blind by the way they know not.' I don't suppose that means only persons who are blind as you are—but it certainly means them as much as any others."

"Yes, wife, I know it. I should n't have spoken so, but I had been thinking what a dreadful affliction it is, and my faith got low. I can't bear to think I shall never see your pleasant face again, and that I shall never again be able to earn much to make you comfortable; but I hope I shall be able to do something by-and-by. Something, oh, if it 's ever so little, to keep my hands employed. How can I sit still all my life long doing nothing?" and the poor man wept. But he soon recovered himself. Something whispered within that comforting assurance, "Trust in the Lord, and do good—so shalt thou dwell in the land, and verily thou shalt be fed."

He repeated the words aloud. "That 's it," said he, "I 'll believe that, and we shall be happy yet."

In the course of time Mr. Darling became well and strong again; but their small means had become very

much reduced by the long sickness, and their income must of course be much less than before. So they removed from their pleasant home, into apartments as near as they could obtain to the place of his former business. The superintendents of the establishment kindly offered him some light work which he could easily learn to do, for which he was to receive a dollar a day, and also offered him the services of a boy to lead him every day, to and from his work. So their life commenced anew.

But the trial which had darkened their earthly prospects had brightened their spiritual, by strengthening their simple faith, and they still endeavored, in their humble sphere, to please God, and do good to their fellow creatures.

Their best room was opened every week for a prayer meeting ; and for years they enjoyed the privilege themselves, and sought to bring their neighbors and friends under the good influence. In other works, too, Mrs. Darling was diligent as ever, and the moments which she could spare from the duties of her home, and the sewing which she was obliged to do from day to day, to help out their little store, she cheerfully devoted to visiting the poor and sick, and comforting the afflicted, and not the least esteemed in these labors of love was the monthly tract distribution. Her district was one of the poorest in the city, and though the work was a self-denying one, she prized it as a means of doing great good. Never did she go out to her visits without kneeling to pray that God would go with her—and she never returned but

petitions went up that the good seed sown by her hand might spring up and bear fruit unto everlasting life.

It was in the course of her labors as a tract visitor that Mrs. Darling became acquainted with Mary Farrall. The wan appearance and hopeless expression of that once pretty face attracted her special attention, and drew forth her sympathy. The tract which she offered her was never refused, and often was she invited to come in and rest a bit after her walk.

"I will come in and *talk* a bit," said the good woman one day, "for I have often looked at your sorrowful face, and I want to do something to help you."

"You are very kind," replied Mary, "but indeed I don't know that anybody can help me. I 'm a poor wretched creature, but I sha'n't be here long to bear my troubles."

"You are sick, and you think you will die soon; but do you feel that you are prepared for death, so that your troubles *will* end then?" asked Mrs. Darling in a kind voice.

"I hope in the mercy of God, ma'am. I used to go to church, and be taught good things—and I pray to God every day, that he will forgive my sins for Jesus' sake."

"It is right for you to trust in his mercy. There is no other way for us to be saved, but through the merits of Jesus Christ, who died for us. But you must also try to please him by doing what is good always."

"I do, ma'am; but indeed it 's very hard to do right when my husband is scolding at me, and my children crying for bread. If I had no children, I could get

along very well, but it makes me wretched to see them suffer, and I can't help them."

"We will try to help you," said the kind woman, whose heart was more than ever touched by the simple words of Mary. "I will get you some clothes for them, and I will send you a nice syrup, for you cough sadly. And don't you think, Mary, your husband could be brought to sign the pledge?"

"I don't know, ma'am. Perhaps if somebody would call and speak kindly to him he might. I don't believe anybody ever asked him but me."

"Well, I 'll send some one to see him. And now, Mary, you must try to cheer up, and trust in the Lord, and don't forget to pray to him for everything that you need. Go to him just like a little child, and tell him all your troubles. He will certainly hear you, for the Bible says so, and every word the Bible says is true. And I know a good man who will come and see your husband, and bring him to the temperance meeting. We will do all we can for you."

So she cheered the heart of the desolate creature, and then went her way to procure the more substantial aid she proposed to bring. She had herself so little of this world's goods, that she could not from her own means furnish pecuniary relief to a tithe of the objects of charity presented to her in her visitations among the poor. But she knew those who had wealth and were ready to give. To them she went, *praying* all the while —for she prayed about everything—that He, whose is the silver and the gold, and in whose hands are the hearts of

all, would open both hearts and purses to her solicitation.

So on this occasion, she wended her way immediately from the basement of poor Mary to the dwellings of some two or three of these Christian friends. She laid before them the object, and collected money and clothing enough to make them quite comfortable. She next went and told the story before the Martha Washington Temperance Society, which was at that time in successful operation. They agreed to take the family under their beneficent charge, and provide some suitable person to see Farrall, and bring him to the temperance meetings. This accomplished, Mrs. Darling went home with a lighter heart.

"Oh, that poor woman, so weak and thin, it makes my heart ache to look at her," she said, as she sat that night at the tea-table with her husband. "I am sure she can't live long, and then what will become of those poor children?"

"The Lord will provide, Eliza; 'Leave thy fatherless children'—you know what it says. Is she one of the Lord's children?"

"I hope so, husband. She seems to speak as though she knew what it is to trust in the Lord."

"How old are the children?"

"Margaret is twelve, and a nice smart girl. I wish some good person would take her. Then there is one eight, and another four. A dear little thing she would be if she were only washed and dressed neatly. But now she looks so meagre and dirty, it is pitiable to see

her. Oh the children! the poor children that I see everywhere in this great city, so forlorn and neglected. I wish I could save them all."

"Your heart is larger than your means, wife, but if we cannot help them we know who can. The Saviour said when he was upon earth—'Suffer the little children to come unto me, forbid them not, for of such is the kingdom of heaven.' He loves them just as much now, and he will provide for them."

And when they knelt in prayer that night, an earnest petition went up from their simple hearts, that God would bless and save the children of the poor.

The cough syrup was made the next day, and carried to Mary, the clothes fitted to herself and children, and many little useful stores were added to their scanty stock of provisions. But, better than all the rest, James Farrall signed the pledge. His good earnings, saved from the rum shop, and expended by his inspirited wife, in a few weeks produced quite a change in the appearance of the house. Every week they came together to the little prayer meeting at Mrs. Darling's, and she had good reason to hope that fruit would appear from the good seed sown.

CHAPTER III.

THE DILEMMA.

THINGS went on thus for a few months, and then Mary's husband began to tire of his temperate habits, and a craving desire for exciting drink and his old associates took possession of him. Still he had some feelings of a man left, and afraid to turn back to his bad habits in the very presence, as it were, of those who had been so kind to him and his family, he resolved to break from the restraint by removing to another location. Accordingly, without saying one word to his wife, he engaged apartments in the neighboring city, and without giving Mary time to inform even Mrs. Darling of her removal, he hurried her away to her new home.

Great was Mrs. Darling's surprise, therefore, when she found that they had gone, and numerous the inquiries she made of the neighbors concerning them. All that she could gather was, that it was supposed that they had gone to New York, for their load of furniture had been seen upon the ferry boat. To track them in that great city was utterly impossible, so she was obliged to give them up, committing them to the care of a watchful Providence, trusting that if he had any more work for her to do in their behalf, he would bring them back again to her care.

The next information which she received of the family, a few months after, was that Mary was dead—that the father had placed his children in the Orphan Asylum, and gone himself to some place in the country.

"How I wish those children could find good homes," she remarked to her husband. "If they stay there they must be bound out at service by-and-by, and I fear no one will care for their souls."

"Perhaps you can find some one, wife, if you try, to take the oldest, and by-and-by you can provide for the others in the same way," replied the husband, who was ever ready to second the benevolent wishes of his wife.

"I do n't know," she continued, scarcely heeding what her husband had said, "why I think so much more of these children than of any others, but I declare I can't keep them out of my mind. They lie there like a burden all the time. I'll go and see them, I think, after dinner."

Accordingly, when things were nicely set to rights in their little room, the good woman put on her hat and shawl, and hastened to the Orphan Asylum. She was told in answer to her inquiries that the children of James Farrall were there, and were to remain as long as their father would pay the stipulated sum for their board, which he had promised to do. But as they were only half-orphans, if he failed to do this, by the rules of the institution they could no longer be entitled to their care.

"And where will they go then?" inquired she, anxiously.

"There will be no place but the poor-house," was the

reply, "unless persons can be found who will volunteer to take them."

"Things look dark for the children," thought she, as she stood for a moment musing. "If their father should return to his old habits and neglect them, what will become of them? The poor-house I am sure is a bad place for children."

She asked to see them, and glad enough were the little ones to recognise the smiling face of their old friend. Little Biddy nestled close up to her side, and seemed to look up in her face as if she were a long-absent mother. From Margaret, the eldest, she gathered all the particulars she could of their mother's death and the breaking up of the family. Her father, she said, had been drinking again before her mother died, and since then she had not seen him, for that very day, some of his relations came and took away all that was worth anything of their mother's things, and they had been sent directly to the Asylum.

"Do you think we shall have to stay here long?" asked little Ann.

"I don't know. Why, dear, don't you like it? They are very kind here to little children."

"Yes, m'm, they are kind, and have given us some new clothes; but it seems so *strange* here."

"And so it is strange anywhere," thought Mrs. Darling, "for poor, motherless children. Though you were nursed in poverty and sorrow, your mother loved you, and her kindness will not be easily replaced to you."

She spoke softly and cheerfully to the little ones; told

them they must be good children, and they would soon find friends; and promising to come again to see them, she returned home.

"I feel," said she, to herself, as she walked along, "that the care of those children devolves upon me. How often and how anxiously their poor mother spoke to me about them, and begged me to be a friend to them when she was gone. Her 'three darlings,' she called them; oh! how she loved them. Poor Mary was a good woman. I really think she was a Christian." And she paused in her meditations before her own door.

Now this good woman had a habit, when anything troubled or perplexed her, instead of talking it over with her neighbor and friends, of carrying it straightway to her closet, and there laying it out before her Heavenly Friend, "who," she said, "was always the best Counsellor." When she had laid aside her hat and shawl, and lighted the fire for her husband's tea, she knelt down and prayed that some way might be opened to provide for those children, and that a kind Providence would teach her what she could do for them. When she had thus laid her burden upon the Lord, and taken for her answer the comforting assurance, "Acknowledge me in all thy ways, and I *will direct* thy paths," she felt happier.

"I am sure," she said to her husband that evening, "I am sure some way will be opened for them, for I never yet prayed in vain."

"The children are very comfortable where they are now," she continued, "for that is such a good institution,

but the worst of it is, if their father fails to pay for them, they will have to go to the poor-house, and that 's a dreadful place to bring up little girls in. I wish I was rich, I would take that little Biddy—she is a little dear."

"But why can't I now? Poor folks have children." The words were not spoken—it was only a thought which flitted through her mind. She hardly knew it was there, so suddenly had it come.

The husband seemed to divine the thought, or perhaps the same good spirit which had whispered it to her, suggested it to him also, for he said, "But what could you do with her, wife? We are poor. I am blind, and you are often sick, and such a little baby as she is would be a good deal of care."

"Oh, I knew it, I knew it," said the wife; "it does n't seem possible. I only *wish* I could."

They said no more, but the thought which had been so suddenly introduced into a kind heart, found good lodgment there, and would not retreat so easily. It was the last thought which she recognised at night, and the first in the morning, and as she went about her work thus she cogitated:

"How I wish I could—but what 's the use of wishing? What could I do with such a baby, as husband says? Perhaps it would be better to take Margaret, if either of them. She is older, and would do me some good. But then I do n't seem to think so much of her. Somehow I have taken a fancy to little Biddy. But I 'm sure I would n't call her Biddy—I 'd give her another name. And then I should so love to dress her and teach her

and have her always near me. She is four years old. Let me see—I could learn her to dust the things, and feed the canaries—and soon she could run of errands. I do n't believe she 'd be so much care after all. It wouldn't cost much, I am sure, for her food, nor her clothes, and I could learn her to sew, so that by-and-by, she could earn something herself."

So good Mrs. Darling reasoned it all over within herself while she was getting her breakfast, and so absorbed was she, that she forgot to turn her cakes, which by this time were burning very perceptibly.

Her husband's voice recalled her to her senses.

"Eliza, what are you doing? Your cakes are burning."

"Why, so they are," said she, springing towards the fire; "I forgot all about them."

"What 's the matter with you this morning? You have n't spoken a word since you got up."

"Have n't I? Well, I was thinking. But I declare, I can't think and work too."

"Well, then, put by your thoughts till after breakfast, for I must go to work. Sam will be here before I get through, I 'm afraid."

So the wife hurried up her breakfast and drove the busy thoughts away for that time. But when they kneeled in prayer, as was their wont, after the morning meal, she said softly to her husband, "Let us pray for those little children this morning."

"Ah, I guess that 's what you 've been thinking about ever since you got up. Well, it is better to pray, and

then you will be more likely to think right. We will commend them to God."

All through that day, the thought of little Biddy, and how she should be managed if they adopted her, was uppermost in Mrs. Darling's mind ; and ever and anon, in the midst of her musings, rose the simple, earnest petition—" Lord, what wilt thou have me to do ?"

"What should I do with them when I wanted to go out ?" pursued she. "She is too little to be left alone, and I could not always take her with me."

"Take two of them and they will be company for each other," something again whispered.

What is this whispering voice within us, that speaks sometimes in the midst of our perplexities, such good and appropriate counsels ? Is it the still, small voice of the Spirit in our hearts, or some angel monitor sent by him to direct our feebleness and ignorance?

But Mrs. Darling recognised the voice, though she understood not clearly whence it came, and she pondered its promptings.

I could n't take Ann, because she is so small, too ; but Margaret is a nice smart girl. I really think she could be a good deal of help to me. I could sew more, and she could take care of Biddy, and stay with her when I was out ; and when I am sick, why, she could take care of her and me too. And she could get John's breakfast ; why, I wonder I had n't thought of this plan before. I will speak about it this very night. And besides, it would be doing so much good, for we would send them

to Sunday-school, and teach them everything useful besides.

Evening came, and the table was spread for tea—and at the usual hour the blind man was led to his peaceful habitation. He could not see, it is true, the pleasant face of his wife, the neat and cheerful aspect of the room, nor the pretty canaries that hopped about in the great cage in the corner. But what he lacked in seeing, he said he made up in hearing. He enjoyed talking with his wife with a double relish, while the humming of the tea-kettle over the fire, the purring of the cat, the singing of the birds, conveyed to him the ideas of home comfort which others get by sight.

"Well, wife," said he laughing, as they were seated at the table, "have you been *thinking* all day?"

And then the wife forgot her own eating, and almost to supply her husband's plate and cup from time to time, so earnest was she in laying out the subject before him, as she had hopefully painted it to herself, with all the pros and cons of the argument.

"I do n't know how you will feel about it," said she, "but it can't do any harm to talk it over."

"You love children, and it all looks very easy and pleasant to you now, wife; but supposing they were naughty and gave you trouble, perhaps you would be sorry you had taken them. It 's hard work to train children, they say, at any time, but more especially when they are not your own."

"I 've considered all that, too; of course I should have trouble—I should expect that. But we can't do

any good without self-denial and trouble, you know, and if we do it for the Lord's sake, he will give us strength. I should expect to have a great deal of care, and to have to pray a good deal."

"Well, wife, if the Lord has put the thought into your head, I won't be the one to put it out. We 'll pray about it for a week, and then if we feel as much like it as we do now, we 'll take them. We can try it, at any rate."

CHAPTER IV.

THE ADOPTION.

THE thing did seem to them of the Lord, and in the course of a few weeks, Biddy and Margaret were introduced into the household of Mr. and Mrs. Darling. The father was found and readily gave his consent to sign the papers which should transfer the youngest legally to her new parents. Margaret was to compensate by her little services for her board, while, her father provided her clothes, and Anna was to be boarded with a woman in the neighborhood, and attend school.

This business settled quite to the satisfaction of our benevolent friends, the next was the ceremony of adopting the child into a Christian family.

"I shall do just the same by her as if she were my own," said Mrs. Darling, as with maternal tenderness she lifted her upon her knee, and gave her a good hearty kiss. "You must call me *mother* now, and Mr. Darling *father;* will you?" she said to the child.

"Oh yes, I would like for you to be my mother," answered the little one.

"And I am going to give you another name, for I do n't like Biddy. Husband, what shall it be ?"

"Eliza is the name I like best of all," was the reply. "Let 's call her Eliza."

"But two of the same name would not be very convenient," suggested the wife.

"We can easily fix that. We'll call her Eliza, and you, wife, or perhaps mother," said he, smiling. "That name will sound strange enough in our house."

"We shall soon get used to it now we've two children," said she, quite delighted at the new character she was to assume. "And Margaret, you must say mother, too, for if you don't stay with us always, I will be a mother to you while you are here."

"Oh, I hope I shall always stay," said the little girl. "I don't want to go away from you and Biddy."

"Eliza, you mean, not Biddy; don't forget now the new name, you'll soon get used to it. And if you are a good girl, I shall not send you away until I can get a better place for you."

The next day found Mrs. Darling, with the child of her adoption, in the study of her minister, where she told him what she had done, with all her hopes and fears about it. He strengthened her purpose, by commending her benevolent zeal, while he set before her the responsibilities and cares which must come with her new undertaking.

"It is a great work to train up a child," said he, "and needs constant study, great wisdom, patience and faith."

"But the Lord can give me all these," interrupted his visitor, "if I look to him."

"He can and will, my good woman, and you have many precious promises to encourage you. If you are not 'weary in well doing,' you will 'in due season' reap your

reward, and I will pray God to speed you in your work."

The next thing for digestion was the plan of daily duties, for the addition of two children to their household made no little difference in their humble affairs. A part of each day was set apart for study, and while Mrs. Darling taught the little girl to read, she took the opportunity to teach her also in religious things. This she resolved should be a part of the daily course, that the child might attain to a thorough acquaintance with the Scriptures, and of her duty to God. Nor did she bestow less pains on Margaret. All this required energy and patience, and involved labor and vexation. But Mrs. Darling was prepared for these emergencies, and found at all such times strength and courage and renewed hope at the mercy seat.

How able are all those to meet the perplexities and trials of daily life, whose grand resort is to the throne of grace! All our springs of help and strength are in God, and his fulness is ever open to us, if we know how, through the Lord Jesus, to bring it down, and make it available to our necessities! Happy are those in any situation who know this! Thrice happy the *mother* who has learned to carry all her trials and difficulties to a loving Heavenly Friend, who can counsel, direct, encourage and strengthen! She goes to her closet weak and trembling, mistrustful of herself, and overwhelmed with her ignorance and inefficiency; but she returns to her household, her step invigorated, girt about with new

energy of purpose, and her very face shining with her new-fed hope and faith.

It was not the least of these perplexities attending her new vocation, to decide if their means would be sufficient to meet the expenses of this addition to their family. With good health she would hardly have given a thought to the matter, but she was subject to frequent attacks of illness, and it had always been their habit to lay by each week a portion of their earnings to provide for such extra calls. Now whether, by economy, she could stretch their usual expenditure over these new demands, or would be obliged to make inroads upon this safety-fund, was the question. She said nothing about it, however, to her husband, for she would not burden his mind with an unnecessary care, especially a pecuniary one, and as for herself, she was used to self-denial. She could go without this, that and the other thing, and no one would know it. In this way she determined to get along, until Eliza should be old enough to earn for herself; and if any extra calamity should befal them, she must trust in a kind Providence. She was confident he could and would take care of them, even as he had hitherto. This subject would have been less embarrassing had their father been prompt in his payments for Margaret and Ann. But their clothes were becoming old and defaced, and still he came not. Would he forsake them utterly? She was the only person interested for them, and if he did not appear, the case would fall entirely upon herself. And this expense would certainly be too much for her. Would it not be better, if possi-

ble, to provide Christian homes for them both? But the Lord, unto whom she committed all her ways, opened the door of deliverance to her, as he often does for his trusting children, in a manner quite unexpected.

One afternoon, when the duties of the household had been attended to, and the children's tasks finished, she gave them time for "pleasuring," as they called it, and putting on her hat and shawl, she went out for a walk. It was a lovely afternoon in the early summer; the foliage was fresh upon the trees, and the little birds were chirping over their newly-made nests. All nature looked cheerful and glad, and its influence refreshed and animated her spirit. As she walked on through the retired streets of that part of the city, away from the hum of business, and the hurried steps of the multitude, her meditations were undisturbed, and found their ready way "through nature up to nature's God."

"Rivers to the ocean run,
Nor stay in all their course;
Fire, ascending, seeks the sun,
Both speed them to their sourse."

So the soul that is born of God, and lives in harmony with heaven, naturally turns its glance heavenward, and sends upward its constant aspirations. "I can trust the Lord," rose almost unconsciously to her lips, and murmuring the words, she found herself standing before the lowly tenement of an esteemed Christian friend, whose humble circumstances but living faith were quite similar to her own. "I will go in and see Mrs. Allen," said

she, "and see how she gets along now-a-days." The next moment she found herself a welcome guest in the plain apartment of her friend. As she entered, her attention was attracted to a light pleasant corner of the room, where were seated around a table, all of the five children, busily employed with some work. For a while she sat talking with their mother, and trying to make out what they were doing. But whether it was play or business she could not divine, for they worked away, and chatted and laughed among themselves as merry as children need to be. Her curiosity was excited.

"What are you about?" said she, rising and walking to the table.

Mrs. Allen followed her, smiling at her friend's surprise. "They are stringing beads," she replied.

"But for what—for amusement?"

"Oh no, they are earning money for themselves and their parents," said the mother, as she looked approvingly over the happy group, while they exchanged among themselves glances of pleasure and pride. "They are very industrious," continued she. "You perceive it is very pretty work, and they are very fond of it. They consider it an amusement, and it brings us in not a little sum. When we came from the country for John's health, we spent all we had to get here and get settled. Then Mr. Allen could not get into business right away, and I do n't know how we should have got along through the winter, if it had not been for this. They work almost all the time they are out of school, and they laid by enough last quarter to pay our rent. Even if it 's only

a sixpence a week, it would be something for a child to earn, you know. It is employment for them, besides, and teaches them to be industrious and useful. You cannot tell how pleased and thankful I am for it."

A bright thought struck the mind of her visitor. Would it be possible for her to obtain the work for Margaret?

"Where do you get the work—and what is it for?" she inquired.

"I got it from a Mr. Smith. He is a merchant in the city, and has this work done for his trade. He employs a good many families, I believe."

"I never heard of such work before. I did n't know these things were used in this country."

"Ah, but they are not—they are sent away to other countries I believe. It is n't very good work for women, though, for we cannot do it much faster than children, and it would hardly pay, but it is first rate for them, for all they earn is clear gain, you know."

"I wonder if I could get some?" said Mrs. Darling, inquiringly, "for I 've got children now." She then proceeded to relate the story of Eliza's adoption, and her doubts and solicitudes about Margaret and Ann.

"If I thought Margaret could do anything to earn her clothes," she proceeded, "I would n't hesitate a moment about keeping her, and then my mind would be easy about that. She 's twelve years old, and a very good girl."

"I do n't doubt but you could get it," replied her friend, much interested. "Mr. Smith is a very good

man, and he tells me he always tries to give his work to the most needy. He is a member of Mr. D.'s church—do n't you know him ?"

Upon inquiry Mrs. Darling found that she did know Mr. Smith, and his wife also.

"She was a member of our Martha Washington Society," said she, "and knows all about these children and their poor mother. I 'll go and see her to-morrow, and tell her about them, and try to get some of the work."

Full of this new idea, which seemed to open to her the solution of her difficulties and anxieties, and with a hearty acknowledgment to the kind Providence who had directed her steps that afternoon, she turned towards home. She said nothing about it there, for fear of exciting hopes which might be disappointed ; but the next afternoon, taking the two children with her, she proceeded to the house of Mr. Smith. She found Mr. and Mrs. Smith both interested in her story, and glad, they said, to be able to furnish her with work. They had no doubt that Margaret would like it, and if she did it well, she should have as much as she could do.

Margaret was delighted at the idea of earning money for herself, and Mrs. Darling encouraged her by saying that perhaps she would be able to lay by enough to go to school one of these days.

While she was pleasing herself with this thought, Eliza was equally pleased at the pretty beads, always so attractive to a child ; and when her sister was seated the next morning to commence her new occupation, nothing would suit Miss Eliza but a needle and thread

that she might string, too. She was gratified, but with many injunctions from her careful mother, not to spill or waste them, for they were not hers. She was then left with Margaret while Mrs. Darling went out on some ne cessary business. When she returned an hour or two after, Eliza bounded to meet her, holding in her hand several necklaces, while two or three more adorned her neck.

"See, mother!—see! all these!" she exclaimed. "I made them—I made them."

"Yes, she strung all those herself, said Margaret. "I only tied on the clasps for her."

The words of Mrs. Allen—"If it's only a sixpence a week, it's something for a child to earn," occurred to her. "Lay all that Eliza does away by themselves," she said. "I would like to see how many she can make."

Day after day the children worked, and never tired. Every morning the beads were as pretty, and the work as pleasant as the first day. They attended to their lessons the first thing in the morning after the household work was done. Then they worked—and played but little, for their work was play. At the end of a week Eliza's chains were counted, and it was found that she had earned twenty-five cents. *Twenty-five cents*, and she was only four years old!

"Bravo—bravo!" said her father when he came home that night. "We shall soon live in a fine house, if you go on at that rate."

"Ah, I will get more than that by-and-by, father," said the child as she capered about in her glee.

"You must lay by the children's money and keep it for them separately, wife," said he.

"Oh no, father, do n't do so," exclaimed Margaret. "I'd a great deal rather you and mother would keep it all. You are so kind to us, and we will earn all we can for you—won 't we Eliza?"

"I will—I will," cried the child, still dancing about the room. "I love father and mother," and she ran to give them both a kiss.

The love was mutual, and their hearts were happy and grateful, as they sat around their frugal tea-table that evening.

The bead work continued a pleasant and profitable occupation, and the children's earnings, punctually paid, added no inconsiderable sum to their weekly income. Inconsiderable it might seem indeed to those who roll in wealth and luxury, but to the humble and contented poor, money assumes a higher value.

CHAPTER V.

FRESH TROUBLE.

With Anna, as they now preferred to call her, things went not quite so smoothly. The woman with whom she boarded, was cross to her, and in proportion as her father became slack in his payments, this unkindness increased. The poor child spent her happiest hours at Mrs. Darling's, whither she was permitted to go once or twice every week. With her sisters, the canaries and the beads, the hours passed swiftly away, and she was always sorry when it was time to go home.

"Oh, if you would only let me live here, I would be so good, said she one day to Mrs. Darling, "and I would earn all I could for you. I don't like that old Mrs. Brown, she is so cross."

Mrs. Darling hardly knew what to do or say. She had not thrust aside this little one because she was not so interesting or amiable as the others, but only because she had not known how to provide for her. She wished most heartily that it was in her power to keep her, or to find some one who would be a mother to her.

"What can we do?" said she to her husband. "Her father will probably never do anything more for her, and Mrs. Brown is threatening to turn her off every day."

"It does not seem as if you ought to have the care of

all of them, wife ; but really I do n't know what is best."

"I 'll tell you what," rejoined the benevolent woman, "let us take her now, and keep her until we can find some one who will adopt her. I will try to find some one, for I know we cannot give to all of them the advantages they ought to have as they grow up. They are intelligent, and I want them to have a good education, so that they will know something," she added with earnestness.

"It always warms you up to talk of the children," said her husband. "You 've got high notions of them, I see."

"I do n't want them to be proud, but I want them to be good, and to know enough to make them useful—more useful than I have ever been," said she. "God never meant for us to look down in the world, but always up."

"Yes, but people sometimes look beyond their level."

"I do n't mean to," she replied ; "but certainly they need n't be servant girls, if they are capable of being something better. God has given them minds, and if they are improved, they will be able to mingle in respectable society, and to do good also."

"Very true, wife—you 're right—I do n't object to your ideas. I love the children as well as you do, and if I can't go about to manage for them, because of my poor eyes, I pray God to speed you. They are good children, and it makes me feel happy to hear their merry voices in the house."

And well might they be happy, for a good act al-

ways brings happiness to the door. The Saviour said, "It is more blessed to give than to receive," and the experience of many besides these humble people can testify to the same. And they had cause in the children too, to be happy, for they were obedient and good tempered. They were grateful, too, as it would be expected of children to be, for what was done for them. They loved and respected their new parents, and were ever ready to wait on them, especially on their father, whose loss of sight entitled him to many little acts of attention, which otherwise, perhaps they would not have thought of. The earliest flower of spring was brought from the little garden border for him to smell of, and the early evening hour was gladdened by the clear voice of Eliza, as she sung the little hymns she had already learned in the Sabbath school. Then it was Margaret's delight to take the old family Bible, which had been so long and so faithfully used by that Christian couple, and read to him his favorite portions, and Eliza anticipated in her childish way, the time when she should know how to read well enough to do the same. Every morning the cheerful salutation, and the kind inquiry, "Have you slept well, father?" testified to their love; and when he came in from his work at night, every thing, work, play or books, must be left to greet him with a kiss, and, "How do you do, father—are you very tired?" came from their hearts as naturally as the water bubbles from the spring. How mistaken are the ideas of those who suppose that happiness is not found in the humble walks of life. Ah, it is love that brings happiness in the domes-

tic circle—that unselfish affection which displays itself in the endearing, the thoughtful action—in a thousand little attentions which only a warm heart will dictate.

The suggestion with regard to Anna was a timely one, for the very next day Mrs. Brown called to say that she could accommodate her no longer.

"She can come right here," said Mrs. Darling; "I will see to her."

The children were very glad that they were all to live together, and their parents regretted the necessity that should separate them.

"You may not be together long," said their mother. "I am trying to find another home for Anna, with some one who is better off than I am, and can afford to take better care of her."

"I shall never like any home so well as this, I know," said the child to her sisters, as she sat down with them to string beads.

"I hope mother won't find anybody that wants you, don't you, Anna?" said little Eliza. "You see how many chains you can make, and may be she'll let you stay."

It was not long before word was brought to the family that Mrs. Stevens, of J. Street, wished to adopt a little girl, and was coming to see about Anna.

"Now do be careful, wife," suggested the husband, "and don't let anybody have the child that won't do well by her."

"That I won't, if I can help it, I promise you," she replied. But it's a risk, you know. We can't tell till

we try; but one thing is certain, if she is n't treated well, we 've got a home for her any day."

Mrs. Stevens called—Mrs. Darling had never seen her before, but after conversing with her and the persons to whom she referred, it was decided to give her the child.

"She is a Christian, and, of course, she will treat her kindly," said Mrs. Darling to her husband. "Besides, she has plenty of means, every one says, and has no children of her own. Her husband is a sea captain, and is absent from home most of the time, and she wants a little girl for company. I think Anna will have a nice home."

"I hope so," replied her husband. "But now, Anna, my dear," he said, as he kissed her affectionately, "if anything happens, and you are not happy, you come and tell us right away, won't you?

"But you must try to be good and obedient, Anna, and not make yourself unhappy. You know, if you do n't behave well, you can never be happy any where. And you must ask Mrs. Stevens to let you come very often and see us."

The child said good-by, and left a happy home—alas! not to find one!

Weeks passed, and she came not to spend those long, pleasant afternoons, so much talked of before her departure. "What can be the reason," they said, one to another, "that Mrs. Stevens does not let her come?" Sometimes Margaret and Eliza were sent around to bring her, but Mrs. Stevens was always going out to make a visit, or to buy something in New York, and could not go without Anna. She would promise then, "on Saturday

she shall come;" but Saturday was always unpleasant, or else Anna had a bad cold, and her mother could not let her go out. Then the woman would come herself to tell the reason for her disappointment, always taking the child with her, though she never permitted her to remain.

"Do let her come and spend the day with us," Mrs. Darling would say, "the children are so anxious to have her.

"Oh, I could not possibly spare her so long—why, it would break my heart to have her away all day," she would reply, at the same time putting her arms around the child, and caressing her with the greatest apparent fondness.

"I do n't believe that child is happy, notwithstanding Mrs. Stevens seems so fond of her," said Mrs. Darling, one evening, after Anna had been there with her adopted mother. "It seems to me she does not look so bright as she used to."

"And I do n't see why she never talks to us when she is here," said Margaret. "She always keeps so close to that woman, and acts as though she did n't like us any more."

"It can 't be that Mrs. Stevens wants her be above us, can it, wife?" suggested Mr. Darling. "I 've heard of such things, but I never thought before that she might do so."

"I do n't know. She is rich, and may be she is proud, and do n't want her to associate with us. But I hope not; I do n't want her to get above her sisters. I never

thought about this, though," she added, seriously. "May be it is so."

Mrs. Darling felt uneasy about the child, and how to satisfy herself she hardly knew. She said but little of her fears, but the next day she went to the public school where Anna attended, and asked to see the teacher.

"Does Anna Stevens come to school every day?" she inquired.

"Yes, ma'am. she is almost always here; she seldom misses a day. But she does not come in very good season, I am sorry to say. Are you her mother?"

"No, she is an orphan. I have known her a good while, and she has been with me some. But now Mrs. Stevens, in J. Street, has adopted her, and she goes by her name. I wanted to find out something about her, if I could."

"I don't think, ma'am, she is a very happy child. She does not get her lessons well, and always says she has no time at home—and she often looks as if she had been crying."

"Oh, I am sorry to hear that—I don't know what I shall do. Mrs. Stevens never lets her come to see us alone, and it's so strange. I am afraid something is wrong."

"Poor thing, she is a good little girl," said the compassionate teacher, and it's a shame if she is not treated well. I will watch her more closely, ma'am, and if I can find out anything I will let you know. Where do you live?'

The address was given, and Mrs. Darling returned

home, really distressed, yet unable to do anything. If she went there she could not see the child alone, for a close watch seemed to be set over all her movements. She could only commend her to the orphan's God, and pray, that if she was not treated kindly, that she might know it and relieve her.

One day, a few weeks after, a rap summoned Mrs. Darling to the front door. What was her surprise to find the school teacher with Anna standing on the steps. The child was crying sadly. As soon as the door was opened, she threw herself into the arms of the almost terrified woman, sobbing and crying—"Oh, do n't let me go back—oh, do n't—she 'll kill me—she 'll kill me!"

"What *is* the matter—do tell me?" cried Mrs. Darling, bursting into tears, and forgetting, in her excitement, that the scene was attracting attention in the street.

"Let us come in," said the trembling teacher, "and I will try to tell you. But I hardly have courage," she added, as her tears fell fast.

"What 's the matter—what 's the matter?" exclaimed Margaret and Eliza in a breath, as, hearing the unusual sound, they burst into the parlor. On seeing their sister in such distress, they sprang towards her, but the poor sobbing child clung instinctively to Mrs. Darling, as if she would never leave her protecting arm again.

"Anna came to school this morning," said the teacher, as soon as as she could speak collectively, "quite late, and I saw she had been crying. So I called her up to me, and asked her why she had not come earlier. 'I

could n't come before,' said she. But I saw something ailed her, and as I looked, I noticed her cheek and ear were bruised. 'How did you hurt yourself so,' I asked, when all at once she burst into tears, and cried so hard I could do nothing with her. So I took her into another room, and coaxed her to tell me what was the matter. After some time, she said she was lame. I asked her what made her lame, and to let me see where she was hurt. At last she showed me her arm, and then her leg, which are shockingly bruised, and she said she was so all over. I unfastened her clothes, and looked at her back, and I am sure I hardly know how she could live, poor thing, she is in such a dreadful state. I told her I must tell you, but she begged me not to, for she said her mother had threatened to kill her if she told any one. But I have brought her here, and we 'll take care of her. I 'll go for the police before she shall go back to that horrid creature."

It is impossible to describe the distress of poor Mrs. Darling and the children, as they examined the poor suffering little girl, and saw her bruised and mangled flesh, which bore ample testimony to all that the sympathising teacher had asserted. It is equally impospossible to portray the full extent of the injuries inflicted. It would shock every humane ear, and be hardly credited by our readers, that such cruelties could be committed in this enlightened age, and in a Christian community. The horrors of slavery, the barbarities of savages, the tortures of the inquisition, will stir up the blood of every human heart, but it would

seem impossible that a *woman*, a member of the Christian church, could inflict upon the person of a little defenceless child, such shameful atrocities.

The first step, as soon as Mrs. Darling had presence of mind to form any purpose, was to send for an officer of justice, in order to detain her should she be forcibly remanded to her cruel home. The next was to send for the doctor to minister relief to her aching wounds. The school committee were also required to meet with the teacher, that it might be ascertained and legally certified, that she did not receive the injuries in school. And when the legs, and arms, and back of the poor child were exposed to them, that they might see the swollen, bleeding, purple flesh, there was not one unmoved spectator. Her simple relation of her wrongs drew tears from every one. For the slightest offence she had been whipped, and when the passions of the horrid creature whom she called mother, were wrought up to the highest pitch, she was lashed to the table, or slung over the door for that purpose. When the common modes of punishment were exhausted, the ingenuity of the woman was taxed to invent new tortures. To these were added harsh and unkind language, scanty food, and every sort of ill treatment. For nine long months the poor child had endured silently. She did not dare to speak of it, for she was threatened that if she told any one she should be killed. She was not allowed to see Mrs. Darling or her sisters alone, for fear of this, and had not a kind Providence interposed in her behalf, she must soon have died under it.

But she was safe now. She had got back again to Mrs. Darling's kind home and heart, and the child was relieved and happy. She scarcely minded her sufferings, she was so glad.

"And never shall she go from here again," said Mrs. Darling. "I'll keep them all. No one shall have a chance to harm them again. And her determination was seconded by her good husband.

"Who could have thought of a *woman's* being so cruel? But I have no desire to punish her," she said, when urged to pursue the woman with deserved severity. "The Lord will recompense it, and it is safe to leave it with him."

The woman was censured by the church—fined by the jury—and pointed at by an incensed community. But what punishment so severe as the goadings of a guilty conscience, which, if dormant now, must arise one day to recompense fully such aggravated misdeeds.

Poor Anna was sick on the bed for three weeks, and never was a child more tenderly nursed than she. Father, mother, sisters and friends, all vied with each other in acts of kindness, as if they would obliterate by love the memory of her past misery.

When she was able to walk down stairs and into the yard, it was a day of gladness and rejoicing.

"You shall never go away again, Anna," said Mrs. Darling, fondly. "You shall all be my children now."

"Thank you—thank you," they all exclaimed, and from that day they went by the name of the "Three Darlings."

CHAPTER VI.

LESSONS IN BENEVOLENCE.

THE systematic regularity of the family which had been interrupted by Anna's illness, was now restored, and everything went on smoothly and pleasantly. The first thing in the morning was the house-work, in which all bore a part. After breakfast and family worship, and they had said good-by to father, each went to their respective duties. Anna cleared away the breakfast things, and Eliza dusted the furniture up stairs and down, and each attended to her work with promptness and pleasure. The care of the canary family belonged especially to Eliza. They had now increased to sixteen in number, and their music filled the little apartment, sometimes quite to the exclusion of conversation. Whenever the child tuned her merry voice to sing, the singing birds, too, would commence, as if to chime in harmony with her gay spirit, but when they grew too noisy, she had only to rap suddenly with her hand upon the table, and her command of silence was instantly obeyed, while the little songsters would stand upon their perch, and gaze at her in mute and motionless submission. Eliza often boasted that she could manage the canaries better than any one else, and for that reason all command and authority over them was yielded to her. They were her



Eliza and her Birds *Page* 50.

little friends. When she sat on her little bench at work, they would sing so sweetly and lovingly for her—and she permitted it then, for she said, when *she* was still, and *the birds* sang, she could always work the faster.

After the house was set to rights for the day, the lessons came next in order. Margaret was now old enough to go to school, and her mother had made arrangements to send her. A good common education was all that she was able to give them, and this, a year's attendance at school she thought would accomplish. The lessons of the two little ones she attended to herself with scrupulous care every forenoon, and on Saturday night they were reviewed in the hearing of father, whose kiss and word of commendation were the best reward of merit they could have. To be sure some people blamed Mrs. Darling very much for being so particular with the children, and "making such a slave of herself, when she was to get nothing for it."

"Nobody will ever thank you for taking care of other folks' children. I would n't kill myself for them," said a meddlesome neighbor to her one day.

"I do n't do it for thanks, Mrs. Norton," she meekly replied. "I do it because I love them, and for the sake of doing good. I think *they* will live to thank and reward me one day for all the pains I have taken. But if they do not, I shall have a reward by-and-by."

"Well, you can do as you like, of course," said the woman; "but you 'll have your labor for your pains, I'm thinking."

Poor, short-sighted woman! She did not know what

the sure result of faithful, parental training would be. She had, perhaps, never heard of the Bible promise, "He that goeth forth and weepeth, bearing precious seed, shall doubtless come again rejoicing, bearing his sheaves with him." Neither had she experienced the pure and sweet, but silent reward which always follows a benevolent action, nor looked forward to that day, when the commendation of "Well done, good and faithful servant," should be pronounced by the Lord of all, upon those who, "inasmuch as they did it unto one of the least of these, had done it unto him." But Mrs. Darling knew and duly appreciated all these things.

The bead-work was still the main stay of the children —for amusement, employment and profit; they loved to string them just as well as they did the first day they had them. They had learned to make various patterns of necklaces, and every style had a new attraction. A regular task was assigned them each day. So many hours they were to work, in which time each could make a certain number of chains, and calculate exactly how much they could earn. A low table was made in a corner of the room, by placing a board across two chairs. Here were arranged their thread and clasps—the saucers containing the different colors of beads—the measure for the required length, and the box to contain the chains when finished. The children sat on two low benches before this little table, and with admirable dexterity and cheerful hearts worked away, silent themselves, but inspired by the bright music of the little birds over their heads. There they sat, day after day,

for months and years in succession, and counted their earnings to themselves—thinking, with great satisfaction, what father could have, and mother could do, if their little fingers could only work fast enough to earn so much this month, and so much next; for the thought of their kind parents ever mingled with their hopes and anticipations. And their earnings were sure to be realized; for Mr. Smith was a good paymaster. In these children he and his wife also felt a special interest. Their neat appearance, modest and easy manners, and amiable deportment, attracted the attention of every one; and to those who knew their history, and the self-denials of those Christian people on their behalf, the three Darlings were a standing monument of what could be done by those in the humblest circumstances for the relief of the destitute. Mrs. Smith was a benevolent woman, and in the course of her labors, her attention and sympathy were much drawn towards the suffering little ones, so numerous in our large cities; and she loved when she had the opportunity to point to this family as an example of what foster-parents should do, and what foster-children might become.

She always had a pleasant word for the children when she saw them.

"You have a very kind mother, have n't you, little girl; and you love her very much, I suppose?"

"Oh yes, ma'am, she is very kind," was the eager reply.

"Do n't you get tired of stringing beads sometimes, Eliza?"

"Oh no, ma'am, I shall never be tired of them, I know. When we do n't have any work, then I get tired of being without."

"You must tell mother not to let you work too closely; she must let you have time enough for play."

"Oh, I have plenty of time to play," replied the child. "Besides, *that* is play."

"Here is a little girl, Olivia," said she to her own little daughter who was standing by her side, "who has earned her own clothes since she was four years old, and she 's as gay and happy as a lark. How would you like to do that?

"I do n't think I should like it very well, mother, I should get so tired."

"So should I if I had any other kind of work," said Eliza.

"Mother says it makes us more careful of our clothes, because we have to earn them ourselves. She thinks it is better than if father gave them to us," said Anna.

"Do you ever see your own father now, my dear?"

"No ma'am, he has not been to see us for a long while, and we think he is dead."

"Well, dear children, you must love your adopted father and mother very much, and always try to please them, for they are doing a great deal for you. It is not every adopted mother who is so patient and kind; as Anna knows. She is not much like Mrs. Stevens, is she?"

"No, ma'am, I do n't love to think about *her* now."

"You have heard of the Home for the Friendless in New York, have n't you?"

"Yes, ma'am, mother has told us about it, and she says she will take us to see it some day."

"When you go there you will see eighty or a hundred children—little ones, mostly—who have no parents, or very unkind and wicked ones. Some of them are picked up in the streets, and some of them taken out of the prison, and are kept in the Home until some one comes who will adopt them. When I look at those poor little creatures I often think of you, and what you might have been, if Mrs. Darling had not been so kind to you. You must try to be very thankful that God has given you such a good home, and never forget to pray for those poor children who are not so happy as you are."

It was not long after this conversation that Anna and Eliza obtained permission of their mother; and, dressed in their best, directed their eager steps towards the house of Mrs. Smith. Olivia opened the door.

"Is your mother at home?" they asked.

"Yes, she is; come in," and they were ushered up stairs, where Mrs. Smith sat in the midst of her little family.

"Good afternoon, little girls," said she, cordially, "I am glad to see you."

"Good afternoon, ma'am. Here are two sixpences, Eliza and I have brought for the children at the Home."

"Ah, thank you," said she, "it is a part your earnings, I suppose?"

"No, ma'am, it was given to us to buy something for New Year's, and we thought we had rather give it to the poor children. Mother said you would send it for us."

"I will, little girls, with pleasure ; and some day when I am going to the Home, I will send for you to go with us. Would you like it ?"

"Oh, yes 'm, very much. And mother said we might ask if you had any papers that would tell us about those children."

"Yes, the Advocate always tells us about them ; it 's a very interesting paper. It is printed twice a month, and if you will come here after it you shall always have it to read and to keep."

"Oh, thank you ; mother will be very glad," said Anna.

"Do you love to read ?"

"Yes, ma'am, very much. We have our Sunday-school library books, and we take the Youths' Temperance Advocate, and the Well Spring."

"And do you ever read aloud to father ?"

"Oh yes, ma'am, we always read every word in our books and papers to him. And now we can read this, and he will like it very much."

The little girls, as they went home that day were very light-hearted, for they had done a generous act themselves, and had received kindness from another.

"Two sixpences !" said Mrs. Smith, as she put the small coins away, "and it is more from those poor children than the five and ten dollar notes which some people give ; for, like the widow, whose offering the Saviour commended, 'of their penury they had cast in all that they had.'"

"That makes me think of the little verses I learned the other day, mother," said Olivia.

"A penny I have,
It is all my own,"
Little Charlotte exclaimed
In a lively tone;
"I cannot do much
With a penny, I fear,
But I'll buy myself something
To eat or to wear."

"A penny I have,"
Little Mary said,
And she thoughtfully raised
Her hand to her head.
"Both missions and schools
Want money, I know,
Though it is but a little
A penny can do."

So Charlotte ran off,
And an apple she bought,
While Mary her mite
To the mission-box brought;
And which of them, think you,
Most cheerfully smiled?
And which of the two
Was the happiest child?

Mrs. Darling loved to cherish in these children of her adoption every generous sentiment, and encourage every impulse of self-denying benevolence. Their penny for the mission-box at the Sunday-school was never forgotten, and they always had a mite for every contribution.

One Sabbath a minister from the West addressed their school, and after he had portrayed the wants of the children in our western territories and the scarcity of books there, until the hearts of his young hearers were touched

with sympathy, he proposed that they should contribute every month, as much as their parents and teachers thought best, to support a school in some destitute locality. He urged upon them the importance of earning this money themselves, and related many anecdotes of the labors and self-denials of children in other places.

Anna and Eliza went home full of the subject.

"I mean to earn some," said Eliza. "I mean to ask mother to tell us how."

"Perhaps she will want us to think ourselves," replied her sister.

"We earn money now every day," said Eliza, "why can't we take some of that?"

"Why, that would n't be any self-denial, you know, because we have to do that every day for our living, and if we took that it would be father and mother who gave it as well as us."

"I do n't see," said Eliza; "mother says it is all ours."

"Yes, but you know father and mother are poor, and they could n't afford to take care of us very well if we did n't string the beads. So all the money we get for that we put into the drawer, and when we want a pair of shoes, or a dress, or anything else, they get it for us. So, if we took that money, it would be just the same as taking theirs."

"Well, I shall ask mother to tell us how, then; for I want to get some in real earnest, do n't you?"

So the matter was laid before mother, and as Anna had predicted, her reply was, "I am glad, dear children, that you feel a desire to do something, but I would

much rather you would contrive the way yourselves. You think about it until to-morrow, and then come and tell me your plan.

They laid awake a great while that night talking and planning. Fifty things were proposed and rejected, until at last they fell asleep. Perhaps some good angel visited them in their sleep, and solved the great problem for them. However that might be, with the earliest streak of daylight the next morning, Anna awoke her sister. "I 've got it—I 've got it, Eliza—the best plan in the world; I wonder I had n't thought of it before. You know we have three hours to play every day; now you see we could work one of those hours, and how many chains can you make in an hour?"

"Me? Eight of the kind we are on now," said Eliza, "and that 's sixpence."

"And I can make twelve, and that 's ninepence," said Anna. "Now we could take an hour from our play every week, and not mind it a bit, could n't we?"

"We could do more than that, I 'm sure," said Eliza. "I do n't care much about playing. We could take an hour every day."

"But mother would n't be willing. She says we must play for exercise. Let 's go and tell her. Come."

The children were up and dressed in a twinkling, and down stairs in the kitchen, where mother and Margaret were already getting breakfast.

"Mother, mother, we 've found out the way," cried both in a breath, and then, with great eagerness, they proceeded to lay out the plan.

"Is n't it a first-rate plan, mother?"

Mother approved it very much.

"How much better that is than if I had told you. Is n't it, children?" said she, smiling. "Now, it 's all your own, and if I had proposed something, perhaps you would n't have liked it half so well."

"But you 'll have more than you want for the Sabbath-school, if you work an extra hour every week," said Margaret. "You see Anna will have three shillings every month, and Eliza two, and they only wanted a shilling a month from each scholar."

"Then we shall have some for something else, and we can save it. We often want money, you know," said Anna.

"Yes," said mother, "you can keep it, and call it your charity fund; and then when you hear of some other object as Anna says, you 'll have the money. I think it 's a first-rate plan. You see little girls can contrive sometimes as well as women. I do n't believe I should have thought of anything half so good."

"I 'd like to earn some, too," said Margaret, "if I did n't go to school. But I do n't see how I can, for it takes all my time to get my lessons."

"Where there 's a will there 's a way, my dear," said father, who had been listening quietly to the conversation.

"I 'll think it out as Anna did," said Margaret.

"Mother, why could n't we give some of what 's left every month to the Home? I know Mrs. Smith would be pleased, would n't she?"

"Yes, and I should, too," replied mother. "I think of all the good objects, that is the one *you* ought to love more than any other. Do you know why, children?"

"Because we are orphans," they all answered in one voice.

"And God has taken care of *us*," added Eliza.

"And given us such a good mother," said Anna.

"And father, too, I'm sure, said Margaret, for mother never would have taken us, if father had not been willing."

"Yes, dear children; always remember that you are laid under great obligations to the good God, who has saved you from suffering as many poor children do; and try in your turn to help others."

CHAPTER VII.

THE HOME FOR THE FRIENDLESS.

CHRISTMAS holidays were drawing near, and oh, how many young hearts were rejoicing in the prospects of merriment and gifts.

Mrs. Smith's two little girls, Olivia and Kate were chatting together in their play-room, about Christmas, and wondering what they should do, and what additions would probably be made to their baby-house and library.

"Perhaps mother will let us have company," said Olivia. "I should like that first-rate. Let 's see whom we could have."

"There are the Parkers, and the Thayers, they would come, of course," said Kate.

"Yes, and Anne Goodhue, and—"

"But Christmas comes Saturday this year, Olivia, and mother do n't like for us to have company on Saturday, you know, because it makes us so tired for Sunday. So I do n't believe we shall do that."

"Well, pehaps we shall be sent for somewhere, then: I hope we shall. I 'd like to go down to Mrs. Parker's, would n't you?"

"Yes, well enough; but come, let 's go and find mother and ask her. I dare say she has some plan for us—she almost always has."

So the house was scoured for mother, who was found at last in the kitchen attending to some necessary work.

"Mother, mother," shouted the eager children, "what are you going to let us do Christmas?"

"Do, Christmas? Why, do your duty, and be good, obedient children, I hope," replied mother.

"Ah, no, mother; what *fun*, we meant," said Kate; "we want some fun."

"Fun? You mean pleasure I suppose. Well, I do n't know. You have so many pleasures it will be hard to find something new. Supposing you should do without pleasure yourselves this time, and try to give it to somebody else."

"Ah, but then you can't cheat us, mother," said Kate, laughing, and shaking her roguish little head; "for you know what you told us last Sunday, 'it is more blessed to give than it is to receive.' So, if we do give pleasure to somebody else, we shall be sure to have a share ourselves."

"I am glad you remember and understand what I say to you, Katy, and indeed it is just as you say. It is impossible to deprive ourselves of pleasure in trying to make others happy. We may sacrifice comfort, convenience or amusement, but we shall be more than repaid by the pure and sweet pleasure which will flow into our own heart."

"But who can we give pleasure to? I do n't think of any body," said Olivia.

"How would you like, little girls, to go over to the Home with me? We have n't been there for some time."

"We should like it first-rate," replied Olivia; "but that won't make others happy, will it?"

"Stop a moment; we have n't finished our plan yet. They have now about eighty children there, all poor, wretched little things, who have no parents, or very wicked ones, or such as are too poor to do anything for them. Now these little ones perhaps never had a Christmas gift in their lives. Supposing you should carry each of them some little present; do you not think it would make them very happy?"

Kate was delighted with the proposition. She jumped up and down, and clapped her hands in glee. "That's good, good, mother," she cried. Her more thoughtful sister was evidently in a study about the expediency of the thing, calculating the ways and means, &c.

"How could we, mother? We have n't money enough to buy even the smallest thing for so many."

"Well, if you like the plan, and are willing to help me do all the necessary works, I will furnish the money. We can sometimes do a good deal with a little money."

"Oh we should like it very much," exclaimed both the children. "But what could we give them."

"Why, we might give a little book to all who could read, and—"

"Oh, mother, they have books enough, have n't they? You know they have had several presents of books, and besides, it is not likely many of them can read, said Olivia.

"Well, I was going to add, we might get a number of little dolls, and you and Kate could help me dress them for the little girls. How do you like that?"

"I should think that would do nicely; but we should have to get a good many."

"About three dozen, I suppose, would supply the girls. There are many boys, and a number of infants. Then we might make some mottoes. I suppose candies would please them as well as anything."

"Well, now, mother, I think that will be real pleasant," said Kate. "When shall we begin?"

"Oh, very soon we must, and we shall need to be very industrious to get all ready in a week. But I am going to propose something else. You know Anna and Eliza Darling are very much interested in the Home. They have never been there, and I have promised to take them some day. It will be giving them pleasure, too, to invite them to go with us. How would you like it?"

"Oh, good, good; we *will* have fun after all," shouted Kate, rubbing her hands.

"I should like it, too, first-rate," said Olivia.

"Mary and Sarah Parker you may invite, too, and that will make a nice little party."

The plans were all arranged, the children invited in good season to forestall all other engagements, the dolls dressed, and the sugarments folded, in all of which operations the children took a lively interest, and performed their part of the labor with commendable energy and skill.

The day at last arrived; it was a bright, a beautiful day, the children were well and happy, the morning duties all performed, and ten o'clock, the hour appointed for the little girls to come, at last struck. Punctual to the clock a knock was heard at the door.

"That 's some of them," shouted Katy, as she sprang down the stairs, and flew through the hall to open the door. It was Anna and Eliza, with their faces beaming like the sunlight. Mary and Julia were not long behind.

And now the parlor doors were shut, and the little party with their dolls and baby fixings were having a grand good time. Ever and anon a merry peal of laughter resounded through the house, and every one felt happy that the little folks were enjoying themselves so much. Simple pleasures to those who are accustomed to no others, bring a keen, delightful relish.

An early dinner was prepared, for the afternoon's excursion was a long one, and after dinner, preparations were made for an immediate start. The travelling baskets were brought out, and the gifts for the Home children packed safely away.

"I'll carry this one," said Mary, "I 'm the biggest."

"And I 'm the next, so I 'll take the other," said Anna.

"And when you are tired we 'll relieve you," said Mrs. Smith.

It was a long ride after crossing the ferry, to the Home, and at that hour a very quiet one. The streets were deserted, the stages went up and down with scarcely a passenger, and the great humming, driving city seemed quite at rest. No other party of pleasure seemed to be out.

"What 's the matter," said Olivia, "it is so still here?"

"It is just the dinner hour, my dear," said the mother, "and we see but few people in the streets. But if we could look into the parlors and dining-rooms of some of these houses we are passing, we should see folks and fun enough. I dare say plenty of happy, smiling faces."

The Home for the Friendless is a beautiful building—beautiful in its neatness and simplicity. It is large and commodious, yet plain and unassuming. Its name alone, carved in large characters above the portal, attracts the attention of the passer-by.

Our lively little Katy seemed to be impressed with the splendor of the mansion, for as she bounded up the broad stone steps she exclaimed:

"Well, I am sure the poor children have a handsome house to live in. I should like to live in it myself."

The mother smiled.

"My little girl forgets," said she, "that a house is not a *home*. Not one of these poor children but would gladly exchange this handsome building for a humble tenement, where a mother's love, a father's care, and the kindly affections of brothers and sisters might shine upon them. *You* would be happy here if it were your *home*, but if you were a destitute, friendless orphan, do you think the fine building would make you happy?"

The question sobered the little folks, and they entered the hall with a quiet and thoughtful appearance. At the right was the parlor with its cheerful fire, and on a marble table before it, lay a large volume, with pen and ink beside it.

"This is the great book," said Mrs. Smith, "where

visitors inscribe their names. We must write ours here."

"What 's the use?" said Mary; "I do n't see what good it can do."

"It is very pleasant to preserve the names of visitors, as they come from all parts of the country, and even from other countries, too, to visit the institution. In after years it will be interesting to look over those names, and see who have felt a sympathy for this Home for the Friendless. I will write mine down first—there, now you can each put your own down."

The little girls at first were quite timid about inscribing their names in such a big book; but a little persuasion overcame their scruples. That feat accomplished, they proceeded across the hall to the show and store-room, where were deposited the many valuable articles sent by the various auxiliary societies, to clothe and comfort the inmates of the Home. Here was every article of clothing, bedding, quilts in abundance, and various fancy articles which had been sent to be sold for the benefit of the cause. The children admired everything, and had their purses been as large as their desires, but few of the book-marks and needle-books would have been left for other purchasers.

They then went up stairs into the chapel, and through the sleeping apartments. How neat everything looked.

"Who keeps it all so clean?" asked Anna.

"Oh, the inmates do their own work. There are always grown up people enough, to do this work."

"Do you suppose they scrub these floors every day? they look so white and clean," said she.

"How nice the beds all look, do n't they, mother?" said Olivia, "all just alike; the little iron bedsteads and the pretty patch-work quilts."

"I want you to observe these quilts particularly, children," said Mrs. Smith. "All these, and those we saw down stairs also, have been made in the country, and sent here as gifts. Many of them are the work of children, who meet in little circles on Wednesday or Saturday afternoons, and sew with great delight and industry for the children of the Home, and while they work, perhaps some kind mother or friend sits down with them and reads to them from the Advocate, of the poor, wretched children of New York, or of some happy little one who has been provided with a good home and kind adopted parents. They love to hear these stories, and their fingers fly very fast, while they determine to do all they can, and save every penny they get to send here for them. Some of these are, you see, Album quilts. Every block is marked in ink with the name of the child that made it, or perhaps with a verse of a hymn, or a passage of Scripture."

The little party were much interested. They walked to and fro through the bed and bathing rooms, looked out of the windows, admired the pleasant houses and yards all around, remarked how delightful it must be there in summer, and then went down stairs. Far down, into the basement first, to see the dining-room with its long, long table, where sometimes a hundred little ones

are seated to a good repast, and the neat kitchen, where the orderly cook performs her daily duties. Everything was neat as wax-work. The clean, large kitchen table was covered with newly-baked and very inviting-looking tarts.

"The children are to have a treat for supper, for it is Christmas night," said the matron. "These tarts are made of small lots of dried fruit, which have been sent to us from little children in the country, who have taken great pains to gather and prepare it themselves, as an offering to the little ones of the Home. So we have used them to make some tarts for their supper."

The eating of a tart is not a great pleasure to many little folks, but to those who always make their supper on plain bread and butter, an indulgence of that kind is very gratifying. Yet that pleasure is small and short-lived, compared with the happiness of those little boys and girls, who prepared the fruit by their own exertions, that they might add to the comforts of the friendless.

And now they had gone all over the house but to the school-room. That was the last, because it was the best of all. Between sixty and seventy children were seated in a large, pleasant room on the first floor. The room was hung around with card, maps and pictures; the children were seated at the desks and on the gallery, with the teacher in the midst, directing and instructing them. As our little party entered, they rose, and folding their arms before them, commenced singing,

Here we learn of God and heaven,
How our sins may be forgiven,
Through the blood of Jesus, given
For the children of the Home.
We 're a band of children,
And we love this happy Home.

May we strive, by good behavior,
Now to gain the love and favor
Of the ever-blessed Saviour,
In this dear and happy Home.
We 're a band, &c.

If our hearts we give to Jesus,
He will never, never leave us,
But to glory will receive us,
To heaven, our happy Home.
We 're a band, &c.

Several other pieces they sung distinctly, and prettily ; and it was truly an affecting sight to look around upon that company of children, gathered from the darkest haunts of sin and misery, scarcely a face but wore the marks of neglect, of sorrow, or premature age ; and hear their voices, chiming together so sweetly in tones and words of purity and love. Oh, what a redemption is it when *one* child is saved from woe and wickedness—but *all these*—it was a sight to bless God for.

"We have brought some little gifts for the children," said Mrs. Smith to the teacher. "Shall we distribute them here ?"

Permission was given, and Mary and Sarah, who had deposited their baskets at the door, eagerly brought them. They were soon emptied of their contents, and

the six little girls tripped lightly around from bench to bench, their arms loaded with dolls, or their hands filled with bon-bons, and soon every face was beaming with joy at the reception of something—*something*—it was but a trifle to be sure, but it added one ray to the light of love and happiness that was beginning to shine around them. It was but a trifle, but it was a token that somebody had thought about them.

While this was going on, the door opened, and two ladies, leading a child about four years old, entered. She was an interesting, intelligent-looking little girl, and the children, who had just finished their distribution, were all attracted by her sweet face, and each must stop to give a kiss and speak a kind word.

"Is n't she a little dear, mother ?" said Olivia.

"She was one of our children once," whispered the teacher to Mrs. Smith.

"What, that sweet little thing ?" exclaimed Anna, as she glanced from her neat dress and engaging appearance, to the rows of poor children around her.

"Yes," replied the teacher ; "and wretched looking enough she was when she first came to us. One of our ladies was walking on a cold winter's morning, down one of the streets in the city, and saw a miserable object lying before her on the pavement, while a little child was caressing and apparently trying to arouse her. She hastened to the spot, supposing that the woman had fallen down intoxicated. As she approached, the child, who appeared about twenty months old, and just

commencing to talk, looked up most innocently in her face, saying, 'Mamma sleep—mamma sleep.'

"But alas! the lady soon found that it was a long, cold sleep—the sleep of death. She had fallen down intoxicated, and died probably from the effects of her drunken habits. Assistance was procured, the dead body removed, and the poor infant taken to our Home. This lady adopted her soon after, and no one would guess from her appearance now, what was her early history."

The children had all gathered round to hear what was said, and their interest in the little creature was enhanced ten-fold by this recital of her early sufferings.

"And now we must be going home," said Mrs. Smith to the children. "We have a long way to go."

"Let them sing once more," said the teacher, and giving the usual signal, the children arose, and in a most touching manner sung,

Friends, you 're welcome to our sight,
We behold you with delight,
You have made our pathway bright,
By your early care.

Once had we no pleasant home,
Food or raiment scarcely none,
Friendless wanderers did we roam—
Sad our lot to bear.

By your work, and generous deed—
By your thought of what we need,
We from want and woe are freed—
Guarded safely here.

Taught and trained as we should go,
While we sojourn here below,
All the paths of peace to know—
Only *sin* to fear.

Let us, then, our voices raise,
In thanks to friends—to Jesus praise,
Grateful to our latest days
For the Home we share.

"Oh, what a good time we have had," exclaimed all the children, as they entered the door of Mrs. Smith's quiet dwelling, on their return.

"It was better than playing with dolls, I'm sure," said Eliza.

"And we are very much obliged to you for taking us there, Mrs. Smith," said Anna.

"I am glad you have all enjoyed it, dear children, she replied," and I hope you will long remember the Home for the Friendless, and the poor children that are gathered in there.

And after tea the visitors departed, to carry to their own homes the story of their happy Christmas.

CHAPTRE VIII.

CHAPTER OF MISDEEDS.

THESE children, it must not be supposed, were always good. On the contrary, like all others, they had their faults, and were often led into temptation and sin. So that, although their adopted parents loved them, and were very happy in the care of them, yet there were times when they suffered much anxiety and sorrow on their account.

Margaret had now completed her year at school, and was learning a trade. Mrs. Darling rightly judged that the education of her girls would not be well finished, until they had each of them learned some branch of work, which would add to their usefulness at home, and be something to fall back upon in case of necessity. Margaret had chosen the dress-making, and was accordingly sent to the house of a very good woman with whom Mrs. Darling was acquainted. Here she was brought into contact with two or three other girls, who had not been so carefully and religiously instructed as she had been, and exposed to new temptations. Her principles were put to a constant test, yet in all points save one, she stood firm amid all their ridicule and persuasions. On this point she was peculiarly susceptible to temptation. She was very fond of reading, and was

now just at the age when the young find so much delight, and so often receive fatal injury in works of fiction. Her mother had often cautioned her against these books, and set before her, as well as she was able, the disastrous effects of novel reading. But when she heard the girls talking about them with such a keen interest, her curiosity was excited, and she determined, notwithstanding her conscientious scruples, that she would read for herself. She took one home, and hid it under her pillow, and robbed herself of sleep that she might devour its contents in the still night, when no one was by to see her. Alas! how many novels have been read thus clandestinely, and how much misery has resulted from the pernicious indulgence. Of all the insidious evils of the present day, novel reading is one of the very worst. The poison is the more dangerous, because served up in styles so relishful to the youthful fancy. Like the forbidden fruit, it is pleasant to the eye and sweet to the taste, but its end is wretchedness and ruin. Margaret knew she was doing wrong—her conscience faithfully remonstrated.

"Yet what harm could there be in just reading a book," she said to herself; "everybody reads them, and why should n't I?"

Alas! it was wrong. Else why should she seek to hide it? When a person, young or old, does anything which he wishes to hide, *be sure it is wrong*. Her mind was contaminated by the book—filled with wrong thoughts and false ideas. More than that, she had *disobeyed* and *deceived* her mother; and when the door of

the heart is opened once to such temptations, it is not so easily closed again. Poor child! they will crowd in upon you now like an armed force, and take you captive at their will.

"Margaret," said her kind mother one day, "I want you to go with me this afternoon to buy yourself a hat. Harriet is going to have one, and I will get you one like hers."

Harriet Roberts was a niece of Mrs. Darling, and often came to see them. Margaret and she were fast friends, and called each other cousin, with as much pleasure as if they were really akin. The girls, of course, were highly pleased that they were to have hats alike.

They were selected to their entire satisfaction, for they had never before had anything so tasteful and pretty. Even an extra half dollar was paid by each, for a handsome flower for the outside, which was Harriet's special admiration.

The tendency of showy dress is always to excite vanity and a love of display; and Margaret was in such a hurry to wear her new hat, that she could not wait for a fitting time or occasion. Accordingly the next day, when she had a call to go out on some errand, she slipped up stairs, and unbeknown to her mother, decked herself in her new hat, and went into the street. She did not enjoy her walk, however, so afraid was she that her folly would be detected. She hurried through with her business and returned, opened the door lightly, and proceeded to her room. She was just depositing the new

hat in its place, when, to her utter dismay, she discovered that the flower was gone. It had not been properly secured, and had fallen off in the street. Margaret's heart sunk like lead within her. She knew not what to do. She was afraid and ashamed to tell her mother—ashamed of exposing her own foolish vanity and afraid of reproof. Oh, if she only had known it, the path of safety and happiness lay *only in confession*. But like many guilty persons, she tried to repair her wrong by concealment and artifice, only to plunge still deeper into sin and sorrow.

"Oh," said she to herself, "if I could only buy another, and put it on before anybody knows it. But the money —I have no money. If I only had half a dollar."

Then she thought of all the money she had earned and put in her mother's drawer, never reserving a penny for herself. The girls at the shop had told her she was a fool to work all the time and let Mrs. Darling have the money. If she was n't a real stingy woman she never would have taken it. She would n't have done so to a child of her own."

At the time Margaret had repelled the insinuation indignantly, but now the evil counsellor suggested it anew, and the girl paused and thought.

"I do n't see what harm there could be in taking a half dollar," said she. "There 's the money in the drawer, and there 's a good deal there. Mother never will know it if I do. Besides, it is part mine, I am sure." She was almost frightened at her own thoughts —for they were thoughts rather than words—but she

looked at the hat, and her fear of detection prevailed.

She went to her mother's chamber. No one was there. She opened the drawer. There lay the money. She took out a half dollar and ran back to her room.

"Mother do n't know I 've come back. I 'll go and get it now," said she to herself. And quick as thought she tied on her old bonnet and was in the street. She walked rapidly, for she had a long way to go, and hardly realized what she was about, until she stood in the milliner's shop. She was flushed and agitated.

"I want another flower like that on my hat," she asked, so eagerly that the shop-keeper's attention was attracted. "No, but I want one just like that."

"Did your mother send you?" asked the woman, eyeing her.

"Yes, of course she did," was the quick reply. But Margaret saw the woman mistrusted something wrong, though she gave her what she asked.

"She knows mother, and she 'll go and tell her, and then it will all be found out," thought Margaret, as she put down the money, and hastened again into the street. "What shall I do? I hate the hat, and I wish I had never had it."

In her distress she forgot she was in a hurry, and walked slowly along, thinking, of the probabilities of being found out, and ever and anon in her despair, she would exclaim, "I wish I was dead." "I wish I had never been born." "Oh, *what shall I do?*"

At this moment her aunt met her

Her aunt—the sister of her father—the very one that had taken her, when a child to the Orphan Asylum. She lived in a village about thirty miles from the city, and very seldom came to see them. When she did, it was for the purpose of trying to get one of the children to live with her. She was not at all friendly in her feelings towards Mrs. Darling, for she was incapable of appreciating an act of disinterested benevolence herself, and always insisted that Mrs. Darling had taken the children, "that they might slave for her while she sat still, or went gadding about on her own pleasure." Two or three times she had made an attempt to get them, but their mother, knowing that she was one whose influence would not be beneficial, steadily refused to give them up. She was disappointed and angry, and resolved that she would yet have one of them, if it were a possible thing.

As she saw Margaret now walking towards her, she thought to herself, "Now, here's a chance. She's all alone, and I'll try." She accosted her in a very friendly, pleasant manner, and after talking a little while, she asked, "Isn't your mother going to let you come and make me a visit soon? You look pale; you work too close. It would do you good to go into the country."

"We can't afford to go into the country, mother says," replied Margaret.

"Well, I'm sure I would be willing to pay for you for the sake of a visit sometimes. Come, go along with me now. I am going right up in the boat. My girls

are both gone away, and there 's nobody at home but John. Come, go along, will you ?"

"I can't, for mother will wonder where I am. If I could go and tell her"—she hesitated.

"There is n't time to go away over there now. The boat goes in ten minutes. Come, never mind ; she 'll think you have staid at Mrs. Roberts' or somewhere else to-night, and we 'll write to her as soon as we get there, and she 'll get the letter to-morrow. Come ;" and she hurried her along to the wharf where the steamboat was lying.

Had Margaret been in any other state of mind, she would have dreaded the idea of going with her aunt. But now her heart was loaded down with a guilty, wretched feeling, and she was longing for relief. Perhaps she thought that change would bring it—vain, delusive fancy. But a guilty conscience is always restless, ever seeking ease in change of place or occupation. But true it is, as when we are tossed with fever, " we change the place but keep the pain." Before Margaret hardly knew what she was about, she found herself on the road to her aunt's house in New Rochelle.

" What have I done ?" was her first thought when she waked up to her true situation. She certainly had not taken a step which could relieve her, and her better judgment told her so. When one has done wrong, it is easier to confess it at once, than to hide and flee from it. The Bible has declared, and Margaret that day, knew " He that hideth his sins shall not prosper."

Great was the consternation produced at home by

Margaret's absence. Night came, and Mrs. Darling anxiously listened to every foot-fall, hoping each moment to see her enter. She had never staid away so long before, and what could now have detained her? Where could she have gone? Anna and Eliza were dispatched to one place and another, where it was supposed she might have gone, but nothing had been seen or heard of her. They went to her room, but everything there remained as usual, and no clue to the mystery could be obtained.

Mr. Darling returned from his work that evening to find everything overspread with gloom and sadness.

"What do you think could have happened to her?" said the distressed mother.

"What motive could she have had for going away?" said the father. "There has been nothing to drive her from us, certainly."

"If she had met with any accident we should probably have heard of it before now," rejoined Mrs. Darling. "I can think of nothing but that aunt of hers. Perhaps she has enticed her away."

"How could she mother?" said Anna. "I am sure Margaret would n't leave you to go with her."

"I do n't know, child, what she might have said to her. But the more I think of it, the more I feel that she must be there."

"You had better go right up there to-morrow and see, wife," said her husband.

"But if I find her perhaps she won't let her return."

"She must. You must take an officer with you if necessary."

"But I have no claim upon the child more than she, excepting that I have taken care of her."

"But she has no right to detain her, if Margaret wishes to return; as I am sure she will."

But their hearts were filled with doubts and anxiety, and the evening wore sadly away. The news of Margaret's departure soon spread through the neighborhood, and many called in, from one reason and another, to satisfy themselves further about it, and to make their various remarks.

"I expected it would be so," said Mrs. Norton, the neighbor before mentioned, and who always had maintained a sort of spite towards Mrs. Darling, for encumbering herself with so much useless care. "I expected when the girls got old enough to know what they were about, they 'd give her the slip. They would n't stay here slaving for nothing. She 's gone where she can take care of herself, I warrant you."

' She 's a nice looking girl, that we know," said another. "There 's no danger but she 'll get along well enough in such a city as this. I guess no harm will come to her, but what she gives consent to."

"I always told Mrs. Darling it would be so," said Mrs. Norton. I warned her when she first took 'em, but she said she was n't afraid but she should have her reward. She 's got her labor for her pains now, I 'm thinking."

These unfeeling remarks were not spoken so low but

that Mrs. Darling could hear them, and they pained her. Yet such was her trust in God and her confidence in Margaret's principles and her attachment to herself, that she gave not the slightest heed to the insinuations they conveyed. Her own private thought was that she had been enticed away, and who could or would have done it but that ill-natured aunt, who had tried so hard to persuade her to give up the girl. She knew very well from the words she had spoken, and the spirit she had manifested in that very room, that she had no affection for the child, and that her desire to claim her was purely selfish. She was an avaricious woman, and the services of such a girl would not be worthless in her eyes. Her suspicions, therefore, rested upon her, and comforted by the belief that Margaret was safe from personal harm, at least for a few days, she laid out the course she was to pursue. And when they kneeled in prayer that night, most heartily was the wanderer commended to a Heavenly Friend and Helper. They felt that she must be unhappy, but how erring and how wretched they little knew.

The next day it was necessary to take some advice before Mrs. Darling could depart, and by the time she had got matters satisfactorily arranged, it was too late for the boat. She was therefore obliged to wait until the morrow.

"I shall pray for you all the while you are gone," said the kind-hearted and pious father. "And, poor child, tell her we do n't want her to go away—that I can't live without her. She must come back again to comfort her

poor blind father. Tell her money is nothing. She knows we do n't want her earnings; she may keep all she can earn if she will only come back."

"She do n't care for that, father, I know," said Anna, "for we have everything that we want always, and I have heard her say often, that she would n't keep her money if you wanted her to, for she would n't know how to spend it half so well as mother does."

"That 's not the reason she has left us, I 'm convinced," said Mrs. Darling. "There is something more than that. I wish I knew what it was."

Slow and tedious were the hours of that day, but they passed at length, and at ten o'clock the next morning Mrs. Darling was on her way to New Rochelle.

CHAPTER IX.

THE WANDERER RETURNED.

Poor Margaret! a flower—a frown occasioned by its loss, was not worth all the trouble you are now experiencing.

Never was she so unhappy as now—never so ashamed of herself, never did the home of her adoption seem so dear and so attractive.

Her aunt was not an amiable woman at the best, and now, having so selfishly and so dishonorably enticed her niece to accompany her, she felt no particular disposition to please her or make her happy. Her wonder was, that Margaret had been so easily induced to go along with her. So strange it seemed, that she concluded something must have gone wrong at home, and besides, her appearance was so downcast and unhappy, that something especial must have occurred to displease her. She wished to know what it was, not to repair the wrong, but that she might take advantage of it for her own selfish purposes. Meanwhile, she gave Margaret something to do, and then set herself about her usual occupations. "I will see how it will work in two or three days," she said to herself.

But the change had brought no ease or relief to Margaret. Her unhappiness increased every hour. The

house was very untidy, and all its arrangements disorderly—so unlike the neatness and clock-like regularity of the home she had left. Here were no canaries in the corner, no beads upon the table, no playful, happy sisters skipping about the room. Her blind father's chair was missing from the corner, and the Bible and hymn book from the stand. It seemed as if the sunlight had grown dark; and when it had really set behind the hills, and night came, she thought she had never known a night so dreary. Now she would have given worlds if she could have retraced her foolish steps. But it was too late. She was many miles from home, and not one penny in her pocket. The flower was there—the fatal flower—but she no longer thought it pretty. She hated it; she hated herself that she could have stolen money to buy it. She thought of the anxiety they must all feel at home about her—of the search they would probably make for her. She thought of Mrs. Norton, the ill-natured neighbor up stairs, and how she would laugh and triumph over it; and then of kind Mrs. Smith, and what she would say about it. Her Sabbath-school teacher, too, and her minister; alas! many things which she ought to have considered before she took such a wrong step now came up before her. No wonder she was home-sick and heart-sick. She wished she was dead. She was sorry she had ever been born. How useless, erring child! No sorrow will bring relief but that "godly sorrow which worketh repentance unto life not to be repented of."

She went to bed, but her sleep was restless and unre-

freshing. She arose in the morning with the load still upon her heart. "I would go right back to-day," she said to herself, "if I only had the money, but I dare not ask her for any. She promised to write, but I do n't believe she will."

Her aunt gave her some work to do.

"Now see how smart you 'll be," said she. "I want to see how much you 're worth at sewing, and I shan't rob you of all your wages, either," she added artfully. "I 'll give you good pay, so you can dress as fine as anybody."

"I 've always had money, and dressed as fine as I wanted to," said Margaret drily. "Mother gave me everything I wanted. I 'm sorry I came yesterday."

"Well, you need n't be so cross about it," replied her aunt tartly. "If that 's the way you talk I guess your mother, as you call her, won't care to have you back very soon again. You 'll better yourself, I know, if you stay with me, but I do n't want you if you 're going to pout and sulk all the time. But come, now," she added more good-naturedly, "cheer up. You are a little homesick, but you 'll get over it in a day or two."

"Did you write to mother," asked Margaret, "as you said you would?"

"Yes, I wrote last night after you went to bed, and John took it along when he went to his work this morning."

Margaret thought her aunt had told her a falsehood, but she could n't say so, of course. "Oh, dear, what a

fool I was," thought she, and she turned away her head to hide the tears.

The second morning she lay on her bed, thinking before she rose, if there was no possible means to make her escape. "I would n't steal the money to go home," said she to herself, "if I never went. I 've suffered enough already for that. I 'll never steal again, let what will come." She was afraid to ask her aunt, for she knew it would be useless. She could n't borrow, for she knew no one. "Mother would be glad enough to give me the money, I know," said she, "to bring me back again, if she only knew how I wanted to come. How worried they must all be." A thought flitted through her mind. "Why could she not go down and pay her passage after she arrived?" She started up at the idea. "I 'll do it," said she. "I 'll try at any rate." She dressed herself, and putting on her bonnet, went out.

"Going to take a walk this morning, eh?" said her aunt, as she saw her going out. "That 's right; it will make you feel brighter. I shall fix it yet," she said to herself, as the girl disappeared.

But she was mistaken. The bird had flown.

Margaret had no difficulty in accomplishing her object, for the Captain of the little steamboat knew her adopted father, and was very willing to trust her. Glad enough was she when she found herself safely gliding over the water towards home and friends, little thinking that she would pass on her way her sad and anxious mother, who was kindly seeking her wandering child.

As she approached the door of the old familiar house, her heart beat hard, and she dreaded to go in. "How can I meet father and mother?" said she. "I am so ashamed of myself." She lifted the latch softly and went directly up stairs to her room. The door of Mrs. Norton's room was open, and the woman caught sight of her as she passed along.

"So, you 've got back," cried she, as she sprung to the door. "They 've made great search for you. Come in and tell us where you 've been, and what you 've been about, will you?"

Margaret stopped. Her eyes were full of tears, and her cheeks pale with excitement. "How 's father and mother?" said she.

"Oh, they 're well enough, I guess," said the woman. "You don't think they 'd grieve much after you, do you?"

"I don't know, but I grieved enough after them."

"Well, you was a goosey to run away if you did n't want to. You got tired, I guess, and wanted to try something new, eh?"

"Is mother at home?" asked Margaret.

"No, I guess she has gone somewhere to look after your ladyship; but I guess your father 's down stairs."

"I 'm almost afraid to see him," said the girl, still weeping. "I 'm afraid he 'll never want me back again."

* * * * * *

"Did n't you hear the street door open, Anna?" said her father, as he sat silently in his elbow chair. He had

promised his wife that he would stay at home during her absence, and watch over the little girls. "I should be sorry," said he, "to have another birdy stolen from my nest." So he sat there, without occupation for his poor blind eyes, but watching very intently with his ears. "I should n't be surprised any moment to have her come walking in," he said to the children. "Some how or other I expect it."

The sound of the latch, so carefully lifted by Margaret, just then fell on his ear very lightly.

"I thought I heard somebody come in then," he continued. "Go, child, go and see."

"Both the children started and looked out into the little passage, but no one was there. They came in and resumed their work.

"I certainly hear voices up stairs," said he, after a little pause. "Who can Mrs. Norton be talking to ?"

"Some of the neighbors, I suppose, father," said Anna.

"Open the door, Eliza. I want to hear better."

She obeyed.

"They are not talking very loud," he continued, "and I hear somebody crying, I 'm sure I do. Run up stairs, Anna, and see if you can't find out who it is."

The child was not used to being a spy, but she was accustomed to obedience, and she went up stairs. Seeing Mrs. Norton's door open, she looked in. There was Margaret.

"Why, when did you come back ?" she exclaimed, running eagerly to kiss her. "Where have you been ? What 's the matter ?" she asked all in a breath. Oh,

you do n't know how bad we 've felt. Come, go down stairs and see father. What made you come up here?"

"Is father angry?" asked Margaret.

"Angry? No, I 'm sure he is n't, but he has felt dreadfully about you, and he said he knew you 'd be back to-day."

"Where 's mother? I want to see her first."

"You can't, for she has gone to New Rochelle to see if you were there, and—"

"Anna, Anna," called her father from the foot of the stairs.

Anna started, for she had forgotten her errand. "Father," she answered, eagerly, "it 's Margaret, and she won't come down."

"Why not, child? Then I 'll come up to her."

"I 'll help you, father," said Anna, as she ran to take her father's hand. "She thinks you are angry with her, and she 's afraid to see you; but you can coax her."

Eliza had sprung up before them, and was soon hugging and kissing Margaret, who was crying violently.

The blind father entered. "Come here, my child, come here, he said," with his arms extended wide to receive her. "Do n't be afraid. Come here."

"Oh, father," said Margaret, "I 've been so wicked—can you forgive me?"

"Not one word, child; not one word. Come right home again to your father and your mother."

"I 've done very wrong, father—"

"Not one word, child. It 's enough that you 've got safe back. I do n't want any reasons or excuses. I know

you did n't do it yourself. I did n't know I loved you half so well before."

So they went down to the little room again, and the canaries sung more merrily than ever, and they all talked but worked busily, and were very happy, all but Margaret. She was not quite happy yet. She sat down in her old seat to work; but while they all blamed aunt Betsey, and thought her such an ugly woman, she blamed herself, and thought she was the more hateful of the two.

And when Mrs. Darling returned next day from her useless journey, she found everything going on as orderly as ever. As orderly, but not as happily. Had Margaret then confessed her sin, all would have been right; but she had not the moral courage. She tried to satisfy her conscience with the inward resolve, I will never, never, do so again. But though her parents suspected nothing wrong, her sin was like a spectre that haunted her path.

CHAPTER X.

PRAYER ANSWERED.

MONTHS passed away, and Margaret, since her adventure, had been more sedate and thoughtful. That winter there was a season of religious interest in the community, and among many young persons who hoped they were the subjects of regenerating grace, she stood forth to unite herself with the Lord's people. How the hearts of that pious couple rejoiced, and how fervent the thanksgivings they sent up towards Heaven, as they saw the child of their adoption professing herself openly the disciple of the Lord. "The oldest," said they, "and the first converted;" and they hoped and prayed that before long her sisters, too, might be gathered into the fold of the Good Shepherd.

"My work will be done, I feel," said Mrs. Darling, "when I see them all Christians. Then we shall feel indeed that we have not labored in vain."

It was a cold, frosty evening in winter. Mr. Darling was confined to his room, just recovering from a long, painful illness, and was ill able to bear any extra anxiety or care. It was nine o'clock, and Anna had not yet returned from school. Again the cloud of apprehension and solicitude settled down upon the household.

"Do n't say anything about it to father, children," said

Mrs. Darling; "it will make him worse, I am afraid. Where can the child be? She never stays without permission."

"Do n't worry, mother," said Margaret. "Perhaps she has gone home with Maria Bates—they are so intimate. She will be here by-and-by."

"I can't help worrying, dear. I hope she is not doing anything wrong."

The thought of how much distress she had caused her parents pressed heavily on Margaret's mind, as she saw, from hour to hour, the solicitude of her mother increasing.

"Oh, mother," said she, "do n't worry. She is with Maria, I know."

"But she ought not to go anywhere without permission. I have never known her to stay out all night with any one. Children ought never to do such things, and give their parents so much anxiety. I can't rest if she does n't come."

The clock struck eleven. Eliza had retired, and Mr. Darling had been comfortably attended to for the night.

"Why do n't you go to bed, wife?" said he. "I sha'n't want anything more."

"I am not quite ready yet. You go to sleep and I will not disturb you," said she quietly, as she left the room.

She sat down by the fire. "Margaret, you had better go to bed now, my child. I sha n't go, for I should not sleep a wink if I went. I think she won't come to-night. Where can she be?"

"Mother," said Margaret slowly, after she had been sitting some time in silence, "I can't go to bed to-night till I have told you something that I have been wanting to this good while. Mother, I never told you what made me run away last fall, but I must tell you, for I shall never be happy till I do. I stole a half dollar from you, mother. Did you ever know it?"

"Know it, my child?" said the astonished mother. "Why, no, I should never have known it if you had taken two; and if I had missed it, I never should have dreamed it was you who took it. But why did n't you let me give you money? You know I never refused you anything proper."

"I know it, mother; it was very foolish, I am sure, and wicked, but I was afraid." And then followed the whole story of the foolish vanity, the lost flower, the money, the wretchedness and the self-reproach. Even the midnight indulgence in novel reading was not forgotten. The mother listened, and when the confession was ended, she sat some time in thought. At last she spoke.

"There," said she, "is certainly an answer to my prayer. I prayed that if you had done wrong you might feel it, and be brought to sincere repentance for it. I was never exactly satisfied that your aunt was wholly to blame about your going there, for it was a mystery to me why you should have been so willing to go with her. Now I understand it. Oh, my child, never yield to such temptations again. Never deceive in any way. Be truthful, honest, upright, in all you do. It was the first time—I hope it will be the last."

"I am sure it will, mother, for I never was so miserable in all my life. I think I would never steal again if it were to save me from dying."

"But do n't trust yourself, my child. You are never strong but when you trust in the Lord. And Margaret, I hope, while you are with us, you will always be willing to take our advice, and do as we wish, for you know we are older than you, and of course, know better what is for your good. You cannot be safe or happy unless you do so. Remember your poor mother, how much she suffered in consequence of disobedience. We are not your parents, but we have acted the part of parents towards you, and you owe to us the duty of a child."

"I know it, mother, and I always will. I always like to consult you about everything, and I am sure I would never marry without your consent."

It was with a lighter heart than Margaret had known for months, that she laid her head that night upon her pillow.

The mother still sat, pondering and praying for two long weary hours. At last a stealthy knock was heard at the street door. The mother's heart bounded as she sprung to open it. "Anna has done very wrong," said she, as she hurried along; "but I am sure she knows it, and I will not reproach her."

She opened the door, and Anna entered, like a culprit as she was, cold and shivering with the frosty night air.

"Oh, my child, I am *so* glad you have come," said her mother, as she gave her a kiss of unusual tenderness. Come, warm yourself by this good fire," and she helped

her off with her cloak and bonnet, and placed a chair for her by the stove. "Are you hungry, dear?"

"No, mother, thank you," said Anna, almost suffocated with the feelings rising within. She wished her mother would scold her for staying out so late, or ask her at least where she had been, but she did not.

"I am going to warm your bed for you, dear. I hope you won't take cold." And without giving Anna any further time to explain, she went up stairs.

She soon appeared again. "There, now my child, go right to bed as quick as you can; it's very late."

Anna hesitated. She knew she ought to explain, but hardly knew how to commence. Her mother saw her embarrassment. "Not to-night, my child, but to-morrow, if you want to, you shall tell me all. You can do it better then." And she bade her good-night.

With the early dawn Anna was dressed, and down stairs with her mother, for she could not rest until she had told all.

"I went to the theatre last night," said she, "with Maria Bates and her brother. I knew that you had often said it was a very improper place for us to go, but they coaxed me very hard, and I gave up. But I never was in such a dreadful place in my life, and I felt so ashamed to be there that I could not look at anybody, and I could not enjoy anything for thinking of you. I knew I had disobeyed you, and besides that, you would be worrying about me all the time. I did n't know what to do. I wanted to come away, but I was afraid to come alone, so I had to stay. And then, when I came home you

were so kind, and never scolded me. If you had been angry with me I should not have felt half so bad. I am sorry, very sorry, and I hope you will forgive me."

"You know the Bible verse, Anna, 'If sinners entice thee, consent thou not;' and there is another which says, 'The way of transgressors is hard,' and you will always find it so, *always*, my child. I am glad you did n't like the theatre, and do n't want to go again, for, depend upon it, my child, it leads down to the very gates of hell."

Mrs. Darling inwardly rejoiced that again she had seen the answer to prayer, in the very unhappiness which Anna had experienced. It was impossible for her to move the conscience or affect the hearts of her children. But she knew that there was a Power that could do it. "The wind bloweth where it listeth, and we hear the sound thereof, but cannot tell whence it cometh nor whither it goeth." So the work of the Holy Spirit upon the soul is imperceptible, but sure. And God has declared himself "more willing to give the Holy Spirit than earthly parents are to give good gifts unto their children." So Mrs. Darling reasoned from the holy word of God, and therefore, when her children were exposed to peculiar temptations, she commended them with a special interest to her covenant-keeping God, and up to the present time she had *never known her prayers unanswered.* Happy was she, for she had got hold of the strong arm of Heaven. She had her hand upon the secret spring which could move the conscience and the affections of those she so dearly loved; and she rejoiced gratefully

in knowing it. Her prayers were "secret," but her "reward" was "open," and many wondered at her success, who knew not the all-potent cause.

Eliza is now thirteen years old, a bright, happy little girl, still working at the beads, which for nine years have clothed, and never ceased to please her. Anna has grown to womanhood, and has added to the list of her accomplishments a good substantial trade. She and Margaret are both members of the church, teachers in one of the Mission Sunday-schools of the city, and constant attendants of a female prayer-meeting.

At present they are all together. But they are looking forward to a change, which is the theme of much conversation, of many fond hopes and pleasant anticipations, for Margaret will soon leave that home for another. We hope the mantle of her adopted mother will fall upon her, that she may be in her turn, a godly, praying wife, a benevolent, useful woman.

The father and mother are very happy. They have never had occasion to regret the step which they took with fear and trembling. They acknowledge the Hand which has led them on thus far through all their troubles and perplexities, and still put their trust in a covenant keeping God. And who can wonder, when we add, that it is with truly parental pride and kindness, they look upon their children and relate the interesting story of their "three darlings."